

amendment that do that, and provide Members with information on that.

Mr. Speaker, I just urge my colleagues to have a civil debate. Let us get past the point of name-calling. Let us have a debate that is as enlightened as they had in the Senate a couple of weeks ago, move forward and defeat the Norwood amendment, and pass the Ganske-Dingell bill.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. FROST).

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, let me start with the rule today. In a continuing effort to block Democrats from imposing fiscal responsibility on the House, Republican leaders have prevented us from paying for this bill. That fiscal irresponsibility is why Republicans are about to raid the Medicare and Social Security trust funds, as an internal Republican memo made clear recently, and it is why just 6 months after Republicans inherited the biggest budget surplus in history, the Federal Government is borrowing money again.

Now for the bill itself: For the past 5 years, Mr. Speaker, Democrats and some courageous Republicans have worked hard to pass a real bipartisan Patients' Bill of Rights, one that takes health care decisions out of the hands of insurance companies and puts them back into the hands of doctors and patients.

Mr. Speaker, the Ganske-Dingell bill does that. It protects patients' rights without reducing health care coverage. During those same past 5 years, Mr. Speaker, Republican leaders have fought the bipartisan Patients' Bill of Rights every step of the way. For the past 6 months, the Bush administration has joined them in fighting tooth and nail to protect insurance companies and HMOs.

It should be so no surprise that the Republican plan, proposed by President Bush and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HASTERT), that is, the Norwood amendment we will debate later today, protects HMOs and insurance companies at the expense of patients. Make no mistake, Republican leaders are trying to turn the Patients' Bill of Rights into an HMO Bill of Rights.

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The Republican plan creates special protection for HMOs and insurance companies, one that no other industry enjoys, and would override State HMO laws, including the patient protections that my constituents in Texas enjoy today and that President Bush bragged about in last year's campaign.

Mr. Speaker, the Republican plan would ensure that HMOs and insurance companies, not doctors and patients, keep making vital medical decisions.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BERRY).

Mr. BERRY. I want to thank the gentlewoman from New York for yielding time. I also want to thank the gen-

tleman from Iowa (Mr. GANSKE) for his great leadership in this matter and, of course, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL) and all the others that have worked so hard for this.

Mr. Speaker, the only way I can describe this rule and the bill that is going to be offered as amended to this House today is ridiculous. Just to begin with, the Committee on Rules was asked to take up a rule for a bill they had not seen, that nobody had written yet. They had to declare Wednesday was Thursday. If you have got something planned on Thursday you very well may lose it, because we are going to skip Thursday this week. Today is Wednesday. Tomorrow is going to be Friday. That just shows you how ridiculous this whole thing has gotten. We have got an old Southern saying about politics that those that get on early get taken care of, everybody else gets good government. I think we have clearly seen the evidence that the insurance companies got on early in the last campaign. They have clearly been taken care of.

We have been presented with this so-called agreement between the White House and someone on Capitol Hill where we have said that we are just going to trample State law, do whatever you have to do to take the State courts out of it; we are going to take away any rights from the American people to deal with their insurance companies.

This whole bill should be called the HMO Protection Act, because they have got more protection now than they had before this bill was written. I do not think it will ever become law. I think it will die in conference. But it is such a ridiculous idea that we would present this to the American people and try to hoodwink them into thinking that they are going to have a better deal.

Besides that, Mr. Speaker, it is not paid for. We are just going to issue a magic lucky card to pay for it. I am surprised that the lucky card is not described in the language.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM).

(Mr. STENHOLM asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the rule. It is not a fair and it is not a good rule. I know that my friends on this side of the aisle are getting a little tired of Members on this side standing up and talking about that we are not paying for the legislation that we proposed. I certainly recognize and support the right of the majority to do as you wish regarding legislation, as you are proving day after day. But for the last several years, I have listened to my colleagues on both sides of the aisle speak with passion and conviction about their commitment to putting an end to the practice of raiding the Social Security and Medicare Trust Fund surpluses to

cover deficits in the rest of the budget. I believe that all Members of this body who have voted time and time again to protect those trust funds are sincere in their desire to honor that commitment. Unfortunately, the manner in which we continue to consider legislation is making it impossible to keep that commitment.

The \$1.35 trillion tax cut recently signed into law, whether acknowledged or not, has taken up the available surplus. It is becoming increasingly clear that CBO and OMB when they offer their revised budget forecasts next month will show the facts. No point in debating whether it is or it is not; either it is or it is not. Those of us that believe that it is, those that say it is not, we are going to know.

But let me point out a few facts. Last week, this House voted to break the spending limits on the VA-HUD bill. There is a reasonably good chance that this body is going to break those limits on defense and on education. Last week, it was 8 billion additional dollars for the faith-based initiative. This week it was \$18 billion for the railroad retirement fund. Yesterday it was \$32 billion for the energy bill. Today it is at least 20, probably as much as \$30 billion for this bill.

I heard my colleague from Arkansas say a moment ago, "It's not paid for." I respect the right of the majority to bring legislation to this floor and not pay for it if that is what you wish. But why and how can you continue to come to the floor and say it is a fair rule when you do not allow the minority side the opportunity to pay for the bill in the legislation that we are for? What is it that would let anyone stand on the floor and say it is a fair rule when you deny the opportunity of the other side of the aisle to work their will regarding the legislation as they see it and let you work the will of the body as you see it?

I really think we ought to defeat this rule, and we ought to send it back to committee with at least allowing our side of the aisle the opportunity to pay for that legislation that we propose. And if you wish to raid the Social Security and Medicare Trust Funds, I respect your right to do it.

Mr. GOSS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Florida (Mr. FOLEY), a Member of the Committee on Ways and Means and a great contributor to this legislation.

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman from Florida yielding me this time. Listening to the debate this morning is causing me some concern because I have heard phrases like "we are rushing this legislation to the floor." Yet it seemed to me weeks ago the other side of the aisle demanded action on this bill before the summer recess.

Let me just give you some quotes from National Journal's Congress Daily today that appeared in print. The senior Senator from Massachusetts